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ABSTRACT

A study explored the connection between reading and writing by examining the writing produced by three young readers of action comic books. The subjects were in grades four and five in a British Columbia (Canada) school and were identified by a survey as being avid comic book readers. During three writing sessions, they were asked to produce stories like the ones they liked to read. The resulting writing was analyzed for the presence of the following list of features deemed characteristic to the comic book genre: mutual dependence of pictures and text; a fast moving plot with high action content; use of onomatopoeia and varied print styles; use of puns and slang phrases; elimination of speaker tags; use of narrative bridging captions; use of irony; and use of foreshadowing. Analysis showed that these features were all present in the subjects' writing with the exception of the mutual dependence of pictures and text (a feature that might have been present if the subjects had completed the pictures). Findings suggest that the recreational reading of comic books had an effect on these students' writing in the comic book genre. (Contains 57 references, a table of data, and numerous excerpts, written and pictorial, of the students' stories. Letters of permission and consent, the student survey, and student writing samples are attached.) (RS)

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THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION IN THE COMIC BOOK GENRE:

A CASE STUDY OF THREE YOUNG WRITERS

By

LINDA JENKINS

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THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION IN THE COMIC BOOK GENRE:
A CASE STUDY OF THREE YOUNG WRITERS

By

Linda Jenkins

A MAJOR ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Language Education)

We accept this Major Essay as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
March, 1994

Abstract

This paper explores the connection between reading and writing through a study of the writing produced by three young readers of action comic books. The students were in grades four and five and were identified by a survey as being avid comic book readers. They were asked to produce stories like the ones they liked to read during three writing sessions. The resulting writing was analyzed for the presence of the following list of features deemed characteristic to the comic book genre: mutual dependence of pictures and text; a fast moving plot with a high action content; use of onomatopoeia and varied print styles; use of puns and slang phrases; elimination of speaker tags, use of narrative bridging captions; use of irony; and use of foreshadowing.

Analysis showed that these features were all present in the subjects' writing with the exception of the mutual dependence of pictures and text. It was felt that this missing feature would have been present if the subjects had completed the pictures.

The author concludes that the recreational reading of comic books has had an effect on these students' writing in the comic book genre.

This paper is dedicated to
Ben Norman, Kevin Perras, and Michael Ambridge.
Thank you for sharing your time, your enthusiasm,
and your knowledge of comic books.

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CHAPTER I Introduction

Reading and writing have long been considered two of the most important subjects for students to study and master. Clifford (1987) notes that historically reading has been given precedence over writing in the American educational system because reading has been considered the gateway to knowledge and a necessary prerequisite to writing. Of the two, reading has been judged to be the most important because it was believed that writing could not be learned until the student had learned to read. It was accepted that the two subjects required different skills and they were taught separately as two distinct subjects.

Modern educators are considering the merits of holistic learning through an integrated curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1990a) and the benefits of teaching reading and writing as complementary aspects of literacy (Belanger, 1987; Jagger, et al., 1986). Theorists and researchers are exploring the nature of the relationship between reading and writing and attempts are being made to discover how development in writing contributes to development in reading and how development in reading contributes to development in writing. One theory that has gained wide acceptance is that material used for reading instruction and for students' recreational reading can have a direct effect on students'

writing (Blatt and Rosen, 1987). The study described in this paper is an attempt to test that theory. It addresses the question: Does recreational reading in a specific genre influence student writing within that genre?

Accepted theories about processes of learning and the development of skills have a direct bearing on prescribed curriculum and instructional practices. It is therefore important to examine these theories and the research supporting them with a critical eye. The current B.C. primary school curriculum is very much influenced by the theory that reading and writing are interrelated processes and that experience and instruction in one of these subject areas will enhance development in the other. The British Columbia Ministry of Education Primary Program Resource Document (1990b) states, "The type and amount of reading material to which writers are exposed influences their choice of topic, genre, vocabulary, style and attitudes." (p.188)

This interrelated processes theory is given general support in research by Shanahan (1984) which shows that there is a moderate positive correlation between level of achievement in reading and level of achievement in writing. More specific support is found in quantitative studies by Cox, et al. (1990) and Crowhurst (1991) which show that young writers' use of cohesion and quality of persuasive writing improve after instruction in reading, and studies by Eckhoff

(1983) and Mikkelson (1985) which show that a student's style and chosen genre in writing are affected by the literature that s/he has listened to or read. Qualitative studies by Heard (1989) and Harwayne (1992) indicate that for some children the development of writing ability is attributable to instructional methods which encourage the use of reading to inform and provide models for writing.

As Crowhurst (1991) has pointed out, improvement in writing happens slowly and can be expected to occur only over extended periods of time. This makes it difficult to prove specific effects of reading upon writing as there are many factors that could be interacting during an extended period of time which resist isolation and measurement and therefore confound studies. Crowhurst suggests that "[I]f the effects of reading upon writing are to be demonstrated, it seems likely that limited arenas must be chosen for the demonstration." (p.333) One such limited arena is that encompassing comic books which comprise a very specific and limited genre.

When examining children's writing in search of possible influences it is important that the effect of teaching writing not be ignored or discounted. If the children are being taught to imitate certain styles or to copy and enlarge upon patterns in books the class is studying, then the style and

form of the resulting writing cannot be ascribed solely to the influence of what the child is reading.

In order to conclude that reading has affected a child's writing it is necessary to eliminate, or at least reduce, the possibly confounding influence of the teaching of writing. It is also important to specify the reading material that is presumed to have affected the writing, and to show how the effect of this particular reading material is distinguishable and different from the possible effects of other reading material. One way of meeting these objectives is to limit the study to a specific genre and look for evidence of the effects of out of school recreational reading on writing that is not constrained by school assigned criteria.

Comic book reading and writing was identified for study for the following reasons:

1. The comic book genre is a specific and limited genre with characteristics which distinguish it from other genres.
2. Comic books are read for recreational purposes by many elementary school students, sometimes to the virtual exclusion of any other reading.
3. Children are seldom encouraged to read comic books at school. (Indeed, it is often a forbidden and therefore subversive activity.)

- 5
4. Children are not often encouraged to write comic books or to submit such writing for school credit. Such writing would not, then, be influenced by teaching or schooling, and the effects, if present, might be more securely attributed to the reading.

In summary, a study of the writing produced by children who read comic books is likely to be relatively free of some of the factors that confound studies of children's writing, in particular the effects of instruction directed specifically at that genre. It would also meet the "limited arena" criterion suggested by Crowhurst. If characteristics of the comic book genre can be discovered in the children's writing it would suggest that the reading of comic books has had an effect on the writing. Thus the specific question of this study:

Are characteristics of the comic book genre found in the writing of children who read comic books?

Assumptions

An assumption was made that the subjects selected for participation in this study were competent readers and writers. Although no tests were given to the subjects, the researcher had knowledge of their school history, and two of them were currently participating in a program for exceptional students.

Definitions

The terms "irony" and "slang" have been used to describe specific stylistic features considered to be characteristic of comic books. "Irony" is defined by The Concise Oxford

Dictionary of Literary Terms (Baldick, 1990) as:

a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance....At its simplest, in verbal irony, it involves a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant, as in its crude form, sarcasm...

(page 114)

"Slang" is defined as follows by the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition (1993):

2: an informal non-standard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech...

(page 1102)

Limitations

This case study is limited by the following factors: it is a descriptive study which uses no inferential statistics; only three subjects took part; selection of subjects was not random; there was no control group; only a small number of writing samples were obtained; there was no comparison made to other students' writing or to the subjects' writing in other genres; coding and evaluation was done by only one researcher.

CHAPTER II Literature Review

Reading-Writing Relationships

In response to the modern literacy movement there has been a tremendous increase in the amount of theory and research that has been focused on the reading-writing relationship during the last decade. Barr, Kamil, Mosenthal and Pearson, the editors of the Handbook of Reading Research, Vol. II (1991), note that:

In 1978, when Volume I was conceptualized, the concept of reading-writing relationships was little more than an aphorism: by 1986, when we met to create an outline for Volume II, the debate centered on whether we needed one or two chapters.

(page viii)

While most theorists are emphasizing the similarities there are some few who would point out the differences. Judith Langer (1986) has noted that both reading and writing are purposeful activities and that they are used to conceptualize the experience and knowledge of the individual. She stresses, however, that there are essential differences between the two processes. She says:

While it is sensible to conclude that reading and writing are deeply related activities of language and thought and share a common cognitive core, surely it is equally sensible to note that reading and writing are also very different activities; from early on, they are used in different ways for different purposes.

And because they serve different purposes in people's lives, they cannot be treated primarily as similar language activities--their essential differences must also be understood.

(page 1)

In contrast to Langer's position, many other theorists are stressing that reading and writing are similar and inter-related processes. Some of these theorists have been influenced by the ideas of Louise Rosenblatt (1978) and Frank Smith (1983).

Rosenblatt suggests that reading, like writing, involves a creating of meaning (sometimes referred to as a 'poem'), that this creating is unique for each individual, and that it occurs during the reader's transaction with the text. This theory was a startling contrast to the idea that meaning resided in the text and the reader received or accepted the meaning. The practical instructional response to this theory has been to combine instruction in reading and writing, emphasizing the meaning-making role of the reader and the importance of an awareness of the role of audience on the part of the writer.

Frank Smith suggests that we learn to write through a process he calls 'reading like a writer'. By this he means that readers predict what the text will say and how the ideas will be presented. Then, by attending to the match (or mismatch) between their prediction and the actual text, the

readers will be learning how text is created. The practical instructional response to this theory has been to emphasize that young writers need to be encouraged to read widely and to attend to the authors' styles and use of techniques.

Stotsky, (1982) hypothesizes that:

[F]requent reading experiences gradually enable the developing reader to internalize written forms of language ...and, eventually, to use or reproduce them in his writing.

(page 8)

Other theorists have pointed out that both reading and writing are language based activities, they use the same visual symbol system, and they use the same constructive thinking processes (Mason, 1989). Gundlach, Farr & Cook (1989) comment on the reciprocal interaction necessary between readers and writers. They state:

The efforts of a writer are always partially directed by the purposes and interests of the reader, and of course a reader's efforts are always partially directed by the purposes and interests of the writer....To succeed in one role, you need to have some understanding of the other.

(page 3)

Tierney and Shanahan (1991) characterize the research on reading-writing relationships as falling into three inter-related topics: the knowledge and mental processes common to reading and writing, the transactions between readers and writers, and the learning that occurs when reading and writing

are deliberately connected. The research exploring the knowledge and mental processes common to reading and writing often takes the form of correlational studies exploring the relationship between the degree of success in reading with the degree of success in writing, and in general there seems to be a moderate positive correlation (Tierney and Leys, 1986). Studies of the transactions between readers and writers suggest that these change in emphasis and direction as students mature. Graves (1983), Heard (1989), Harste, Short & Burke (1988), and Harwayne (1992) have completed qualitative studies examining the effects of combining instruction in reading and writing. They emphasize the importance of reading and the positive effect of reading on the teaching of writing, basing their claims on an examination of the self-reports of established writers and on practical experiences in teaching children to write.

Bissex (1980), Goodman (1986), and Juel, Griffith & Gough (1986), have completed studies at the emergent literacy level which show that development in writing can precede and have an effect on development in reading. There have also been studies at the upper elementary school, secondary school and college level exploring the effect of various writing strategies on reading comprehension which suggest that development in writing ability can have the effect of

promoting reading development. (Belanger, 1987; Hillocks, 1986).

There have been few studies that explore the effect of reading development on the development of writing, perhaps because the implicit assumption that reading has a direct and positive effect on writing makes this idea seem obvious and not worthy of study, or perhaps because the possible effect is difficult to measure and statistically valid results cannot be ascertained.

The assumption that reading has a direct effect on writing comes from personal experiences that are common to many people. One such experience is seeing the first writing attempts of young children. Goodman & Goodman (1983) attribute young children's almost exclusive use of capital letters in their attempts to write to be the effect of their exposure to such print on signs and advertisements. In addition, many adults have had the experience of looking at models before attempting to write particular business forms such as references, funding proposals, memoranda, and advertisements.

In the same vein, university students will read successful essays and thesis papers for inspiration and guidance in their own attempts, and would-be writers are often told to read widely in the genre to which they aspire. Prospective authors in fields as varied as romance novels,

professional journals and children's books are told to study published works to note conventions of length, style, format, etc. (Booth, 1989; Falk, 1983; Stinson, 1991).

Another support for the assumption that reading has an effect on writing is the self-reports of established writers. Collections of author interviews are available which indicate that many authors do deliberately refer to other writers' works for inspiration or stylistic guidance. Two examples of such collections are The Writer's Chapbook (Plimpton, 1989) and The Pleasure of Reading (Fraser, 1992).

Members of The Teacher's College Writing Project have collected a variety of quotations from a number of authors. Harwayne (1992) includes quotations on the importance of reading to the development of writing as chapter heads in her book. Three examples of these quotes are:

Read, read, read. Read everything--trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write....

William Faulkner

(page 158)

Listening to stories when you are really young and then reading them as you get older are really the best ways to becoming a writer.

Jane Yolen

(page 112)

Simply put, I try to write the kind of books that I like to read. I go to books for training the way a ball player goes to the ball park for practice. I don't try to imitate other writers.

but I am always trying to learn from others.

Robert Cormier
(page 276)

There are numerous difficulties associated with studying the effect of reading on writing. Although many have assumed the existence of this effect it is nevertheless very difficult to prove or to measure because of the complexity of the acts of reading and writing. In spite of the difficulty, however, there has been some research done in this field. Eckhoff (1983), Mikkelsen (1985), Cox, Shanahan & Sulzby (1990), and Crowhurst (1991) produced quantitative studies which examined children's writing for evidence of the influence of reading. Their analyses indicate that children's use of cohesion, linguistic structures, and style in their writing is affected by their level of reading ability and by the reading materials they are exposed to in school.

The research summarized to this point leads to the following generalizations relating to the specific question of how reading affects writing:

1. Reading and writing are related in complex ways.
2. Combining instruction in reading and writing can be beneficial to both subject areas.
3. The genre and content of childrens' writing can be affected by their reading material.
4. Writing in specific discourse types can be affected by reading instruction in that discourse type.

5. Specific writing conventions can be learned from reading and applied to writing.
6. General style of writing and the use of some linguistic structures can be affected by instructional reading material.

Each of these generalizations can be illustrated by reference to key studies.

1. Reading and writing are related in complex ways.

Barr et al. (1991) note that early studies of the relationship between reading and writing found a definite positive relationship between achievement in reading and achievement in writing. More recent studies have shown that the relationship is not so straightforward--it varies across grade levels and proficiency levels and according to which particular skills are being measured.

Shanahan (1984) attempted to discover the nature of the relationship between reading and writing through analyzing and correlating multiple components of each skill. His subjects in second grade and fifth grade classes were given four reading tests and a spelling test, and each student produced two writing samples which were analyzed for complexity, vocabulary and organizational structure. Reading and writing were found to be significantly related at both grade levels but Shanahan was not able to establish which subskills in

either subject contribute to the development of subskills in the other. Different subskills were found to be relatively more important at different grade levels. The author concluded that reading and writing are related in complex ways and that the relationship changes as students become more proficient readers. He suggests that beginning writing skills play a more important role in early learning whereas reading comprehension was more important beyond the very beginning stages of literacy learning.

It could be suggested that Shanahan's tests of both reading and writing were not adequate, but it is difficult to reduce either reading or writing to skills that can be established or described by a few samples and tests. The very complexity of the two processes makes it seem unlikely that anything more than a moderate undelineated relationship could be established by tests of subskills.

2. Combining instruction in reading and writing can be beneficial to both subject areas.

Since both reading and writing are based on language, use the same symbol system and possibly use similar cognitive processes, it seems to make sense that instruction in both subjects might be done together. And since readers and writers are mutually dependent it also makes sense that students should be aware of the writer when they are reading

and of the reader when they are writing. But it is difficult to measure the effects of combining instruction. The complexities of the interrelationships, the processes and the products seem to be best described through case studies.

Heard (1989) and Harwayne (1992) have produced reflective personal narratives about the value of teaching reading and writing together. Heard is a poet and her narrative is a description of the methods she used to encourage children to enjoy and write poetry in a number of elementary classrooms in New York. She includes many samples of the children's work. She emphasizes that every writer of poetry is first a reader of poetry or has had the experience of listening to poetry. As part of her program for teaching children to write poems she first read and recited poems for them. Then she provided students with copies of the poems she had read so that they could read and study these for themselves. She also provided poetry books for the children to browse through and share with their friends. She explained to them that on days when she knew she was going to write she "usually spent a couple of hours reading poems to get inspired". (p.6)

She explains her emphasis on hearing and reading poetry:

After hearing many poems, students begin to know what different kinds of poetry sound like, and they come to their own understanding of what makes a poem a poem. It's the equivalent of a young pianist hearing music from Chopin and Scott Joplin; our student's ears are being trained. They

become familiar with the voice of poetry, which is crucial preparation for writing their own.

(page 3)

From the samples of children's work that she includes in the book it is obvious that the children have developed both their writing ability and their ability to read poetry. Heard would conclude that at least part of the writing development is attributable to the children's reading of poetry and that writing their own poetry made them better able to understand and appreciate other poets' work.

Harwayne (1992) describes her work teaching writing to a fifth grade class in New York. She describes the children and their environment and explains the teaching methods she used and the children's reactions. The book contains many samples of the students' work.

Harwayne feels that it is important to surround children with fine literature. She explains:

Quality texts are nonnegotiable....It's nearly impossible to help students become life-long readers and writers if they don't have access to wonderful literature....It's also nearly impossible to help students raise the quality of their writing if they don't have access to wonderful literature.

(page 337)

Harwayne describes the writing workshop method of teaching writing including mini-lessons, conferences, response groups, and author studies, and through it all she shows how literature can play an important role. She lists the

following reasons for referring to literature while conferring with students:

- To spark ideas for their own writing
- To generate more thoughts on a particular topic
- To gather specific bits of information
- To study traditions of a genre
- To study specific literary techniques
- To learn from a particular writer
- To imitate in order to get out of a rut
- To study shape or design options
- To gather advice from professional writers
- To learn editing skills
- To appreciate publishing options
- To be challenged
- To be inspired

(pages 241-243)

Harwayne includes samples of children's writing and demonstrates how the above uses of literature are illustrated in their work. She concludes that the children's development of writing ability is in large part attributable to their engagement with literature and that some writing activities can increase the children's understanding of literature.

The narratives by Heard (1989) and Harwayne (1992) present persuasive arguments for teaching literature together with instruction in writing. Because the authors were not

doing a quantified data analysis it is not possible to generalize any results.

3. The genre and content of children's narrative writing can be affected by their reading material.

One of the ways children learn is through imitation, both consciously and unconsciously. If a story or even a phrase within a story makes a lasting impression on a child it is quite possible that the child would internalize elements of that story or phrase and later reproduce those elements in his or her own writing.

The narratives of Harwayne and Heard described above support the generalization that story writing is affected by reading as does a study by Mikkelson (1985). Mikkelson examined the effects of children's reading on the genre and content of their writing. She studied how children assimilated literary elements from books that were not school texts. Her subjects were 15 children aged 7 to 10 years. The children met for approximately 30 hours and were asked to tell or write stories after listening to folk tales or looking at fantasy picture books. (She does not specify how much reading was done.) Of the 77 stories she collected, 52 were judged to be related in some way to the literary materials. Analysis by the single rater indicated that these stories could be grouped into five categories: 1) retelling, 2) borrowing (adaptation),

3) blending (combining elements of two stories), 4) re-creating (borrowing one element and re-creating it in a new situation), and 5) transforming (reproducing themes in original plots). Older children produced more blendings and transformations, and younger children produced more borrowings and re-creations. The author concluded that children would reshape literature after hearing stories, and that maturation played a part in the quality of that reshaping.

Mikkelsen's study suggests that listening to and reading literature has an effect on the genre and content of young children's narrative writing. Her analysis of the stories provides a useful framework for categorizing children's writing by content but it does not provide for a consideration of style.

4. Writing in specific discourse types can be affected by reading instruction in that discourse type.

Learning to write expository discourse has traditionally been one of the more onerous tasks for upper elementary and secondary school students. Research by Crowhurst (1991) would suggest that for at least one discourse type reading instruction can lead to improvement in student writing.

The study conducted by Crowhurst explored the interrelationships between reading and writing persuasive discourse. The subjects were 100 grade 6 students in two

classes in each of two schools. They were stratified by gender and ability and then randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups: 1) instruction in a model for persuasion plus writing practice; 2) instruction in a model for persuasion plus reading practice; 3) reading novels and writing book reports plus a single lesson in the persuasion model; 4) reading novels and writing book reports (control group). The groups were given pretests on writing a recall of a persuasive text and writing persuasive compositions. They were then given ten 45-minute lessons over five weeks followed by posttests in reading recall and writing persuasive compositions. Results indicated that groups 1 and 2 scored significantly higher than the control group on writing quality, the organization of compositions, on the number of conclusions and text markers used, and on the degree of elaboration of reasons. There were no differences between the groups on reading recall scores. The author concludes that while there was no clear support for the idea that instruction and practice in writing will improve reading, there was modest support for the proposition that instruction and practice in reading persuasion will improve the writing of persuasion. She also notes that this study involved a single, narrow discourse type and that the results obtained can only be taken as a "small piece of evidence for the more general proposition that reading affects writing." (page 333)

5. Specific writing conventions can be learned from reading and applied to writing.

Although it has sometimes been said that writing is just talk written down, there are in fact many specific writing conventions that are not used in informal speech which relies on body language, voice inflection and interaction to convey some of the meaning. (A simple example of a writing convention is the use of punctuation marks.) Studies have been conducted which suggest that some writing conventions can be learned from reading.

Cox, Shanahan and Sulzby (1990) theorized that effective readers would internalize conventions from reading and would then use these conventions in their writing. They studied children's use of cohesion, the linking of elements of the text through repetition. The study was designed to examine the relation between the children's reading performance and their use of cohesion in their own writing. They analyzed two narratives and two expository writing samples from each of 48 students in third and fifth grade classes. The subjects represented high and low reading comprehension groups. Results indicated that good readers displayed more knowledge of cohesion than poor readers regardless of grade or genre. The authors conclude that knowledge of cohesion was related to children's developing writing skills and that this knowledge

was directly influenced by the text materials and instructional practices used with better readers because better readers read more and their reading text was less contrived and simple than that used for poor readers.

While this study does show that the students' use of cohesion was related to their overall reading ability it does not show a direct causal link between the text materials and writing ability.

6. General style of writing and the use of some linguistic structures can be affected by instructional reading material.

Several of the authors quoted earlier in this chapter claimed to have read other authors' writing in a deliberate effort to learn their style. It has been suggested that children also can learn styles of writing through familiarity with these styles from their reading.

Eckhoff's (1983) study explores the question of the effect of basal reading texts on children's writing. Eckhoff examined reading texts and writing samples from two second-grade classes to explore the possible effects of children's reading on their writing. The two classes were using basal readers that were very different. Basal A used by the first class was written in a complex literary prose style, while

Basal B used by the second class was written in a simplified style. Narrative and expository writing samples were obtained from each child and these were analyzed for style, format and frequency of occurrence of literary structures. Results indicated that the children used linguistic structures similar to those found in their readers. The Basal A children tended to use more elaborate sentence structures and complex verb forms while the Basal B children tended to use simple sentences and verb forms. The format and style of the children's writing tended to follow that used in the basal text as well.

Eckhoff does not consider the possible confounding of results that could have arisen from the students' reading of materials other than the basal readers or from the influence of writing instruction. Although this study is widely quoted to prove that reading affects writing, there does not appear to have been many attempts at replication. It is, after all, difficult to show that school reading experiences are a child's only reading experiences or that a particular book is what has influenced a child's writing to the exclusion of possible influences of other books, media, or the direct teaching of writing skills.

With regard to a child's experiences with literature there are several factors that must be kept in mind: first, many publishers of basal readers have made an effort toward

improving the style and language used in these books and often include complete tradebooks or excerpts from tradebooks with their original illustrations (Kucan, 1994); second, publication of children's literature in trade books has seen tremendous growth in the last 15 years, with these books now being widely available in public and school libraries, in book stores, and through school and mail order book clubs; and finally, changes in the educational theory and philosophy of teaching reading have resulted in a greater emphasis on the use of quality literature to teach reading even at the earliest stages.

All of these changes have meant that most children will have contact with a variety of written forms and literary styles and it is unlikely that there would be many primary classrooms in British Columbia in which children have been exposed only to the kinds of limited and stultifying readers described by Eckhoff.

Theory and Research Regarding Comic Books

Comic books have been present in our society for most of this century and are now considered as mass media (Silbermann and Dyroff, 1986). While we tend to think of them as being "trashy" entertainment for children, comic books are also used for information and education, and adult readers form a large

part of comic consumers. This is particularly noticeable in the Japanese culture where Loveday and Chiba (1986) report that "manga (the Japanese word for comic, cartoon, caricature and animation) is an almost essential constituent of daily Japanese life" (p. 158).

Wigand (1986) notes that surprisingly little research on comic books has been conducted by social scientists and the little research that has been done is "dated, contradictory, sometimes anecdotal and lacks the application of advanced empirical research design and methods" (p. 30).

Theorists in the educational community such as Haugaard (1973) and Alongi (1974) tend to focus on the capacity for comic books to motivate reluctant readers. Elliott (1985) comments that comics should be taught as a separate medium with their own grammar. Barron (1991) and Leggo (unpublished) note that comic books are part of the popular culture and should therefore be included in school curriculums. Barron tends to view comics as providing a medium for leading students on to other literature, whereas Leggo maintains that popular culture is worthy of study because "to ignore popular culture is to erect a high wall of exclusion around our schools" (p.4). Leggo also notes that it is important to teach readers to be attuned to the messages inherent in the texts and to be willing to challenge these.

A number of researchers and theorists have listed the features and conventions that they consider to be essential to the comic book genre. The following list of features was compiled from the works of Reitberger and Fuchs (1972), Alongi (1972), Palumbo (1979), Silberman and Dyroff (1986), and Barker (1989):

- 1) mutual dependence of pictures and text
- 2) a fast moving plot with a high action content
- 3) use of onomatopoeia and varied print styles
- 4) use of puns and slang phrases and expressions
- 5) elimination of speaker tags
- 6) use of narrative bridging captions
- 7) use of irony
- 8) use of foreshadowing
- 9) use of flashback
- 10) use of symbolism
- 11) allusions to mythology

If reading has an effect on genre, content and style of writing then the texts of students who read comic books should exhibit some of these features that have been identified as being characteristic of the comic book genre. The study which follows will explore this question.

CHAPTER III Research Design

A growing body of research has led most researchers to agree that reading and writing are interrelated. Although the research tends to raise more questions than it answers about the nature of that relationship, it has been generally accepted wisdom that reading has an effect on writing. This study is an attempt to test that accepted wisdom and to search for evidence that reading effects writing. The limited genre of comic books was chosen for study in order to avoid having to monitor all the literature available to students and to avoid having to try to account for the effects of instruction. The specific question examined is:

Are characteristics of the comic book genre found in the writing of children who read comic books?

The question is addressed through examining writing samples from a small group of avid comic book readers to see if these samples exhibit characteristics of the comic book genre.

MethodSubjects

A small group of grade 4, 5, and 6 students in a northern B.C. community were surveyed to establish their participation

in a variety of leisure activities. (Survey-Appendix C). The students surveyed were taking part in a pull-out enrichment program. On the basis of their responses to the survey, four boys were invited to participate in the study. These particular students had all indicated that they had read 15 or more comic books during the previous month and that their favourite comics were of the action superhero type (e.g., Batman, X-Men). The four students agreed to participate and the brother of one also volunteered and was accepted because he was known to be a competent reader and writer and he also met the criteria of having read 15 or more action comics during the previous month. Two of the students dropped out in the early stages, so the study was completed with three subjects who chose as their pseudonyms Azreal, Scott, and Jean Luc. Azreal was in Grade 4, Scott and Jean Luc in Grade 5.¹

Procedure

The boys were asked to attend four one-hour sessions: during the first three they would write and during the last session they would discuss the writing and answer questions about it. Although the sessions were originally scheduled to occur once a week for four consecutive weeks so that it would be completed in one month, it actually took longer due to illnesses, holidays and other demands on the boys' time. The writing sessions were held in a school that was adjacent to

the school the boys attended: the discussion session was held in a nearby Pizza Hut.

At the initial session the boys were asked if they could write exciting and interesting stories like the ones they liked to read. They talked about the most exciting stories they read--comic books--and they discussed their current favourite superhero. When asked again if they could write stories like that they became quite enthusiastic.

Scott: I've been wanting to write a comic book for a while now. This will be a good chance.

Jean Luc: I've been making up a new superhero and I want to write a comic book about him.

When pressed again to write a story about the superheroes, the boys politely insisted that the stories they had in mind to write had to be done as a comic book. However, they did agree that drawing the pictures was going to be a very time-consuming task and that they would work on the writing during their one-hour sessions and do the pictures at home. The researcher agreed to provide the boys with a typed copy of their stories and to correct spelling errors where necessary. At the end of each writing session the researcher read through the writing with each boy to ensure that she understood his intention and was able to read what he had written.

During the course of the study Scott wrote a story about the continuing conflict between two of his favourite X-Men

characters--Wolverine and Sabertooth. Jean Luc completed a story about Captain Nepalm, a character he invented, and Azreal worked on three different stories: a retelling of one of his favourite Batman books, a direct copy of a Predator book, and a retelling about a conflict between Batman and Predator.

The completed writing was examined to see if it contained any of the following features of comic books as identified by Reitberger and Fuchs (1972), Alongi (1974), Elliott (1985), Silbermann and Dyroff (1986), and Barker (1989):

- 1) mutual dependence of pictures and text
- 2) a fast moving plot with a high action content
- 3) use of onomatopoeia and varied print styles
- 4) use of puns and slang phrases and exclamations
- 5) elimination of speaker tags
- 6) use of narrative bridging captions
- 7) use of the irony
- 8) use of foreshadowing.

(Other features identified by these authors including narrative techniques such as use of flashback, symbolism, and allusions to mythology, etc. were ignored as being beyond the subjects' level of development.)

Coding was done by the researcher. The papers were reread for evidence of each of the eight features mentioned above and notes were made of examples which appeared to meet

the criteria. In some cases the comments that the boys made while they were writing and during the discussion session were used in deciding whether a feature was indicated by the text. (This was particularly the case for feature 1--the mutual dependence of pictures and text. The boys could explain how the pictures and text would support each other, but they did not actually draw the pictures.) Coding for the number of fights and chases (evidence of high action content) presented some problems as it was difficult to establish when one fight or chase stopped and another began. The decision was usually made on the basis that a change in locale indicated a beginning or ending of a particular action. For example, in Jean Luc's story the changes in locale indicated by the words A while later and Later on the bridge were considered to mark the end of a fight.

In addition, several comic books that the boys recommended were examined for the same eight features, first to ensure that these actually were recognizable features in the comic books, and second to compare the examples in the published material with the boys' work. Examples from the comic books are shown below:

1. Mutual dependence of pictures and text.
from BATMAN #501, Nov. 93

Page 11 of this book has six frames, the first three depicting a conversation between Batman and Robin and the last

three a conversation between Batman and the police commissioner. One picture shows Batman driving away but there is no mention of this in the text. Another frame shows the signal that indicates that the meeting between Batman and the policeman was pre-arranged and again there is no mention of this in the text. The pictures are necessary to explain the shift in scene and characters. The text indicates that both Robin and the police commissioner are questioning Batman's actions and the pictures appear to reflect this by having the characters stances indicate distance and the facial expressions indicate concern.

2.A fast moving plot with a high action content.
from X-MEN 2099 #2 November, 1993

This book exemplifies a fast moving plot with the protagonists being forced to engage in numerous battles with the enemy forces, escaping from one dangerous situation only to be plunged into yet another. Travel is accomplished by fast moving vehicles and characters engage in hand-to-hand combat and also employ an extensive array of weapons--technologically advanced, futuristic and supernatural. The book opens with the protagonists being pursued and ends after several encounters in different locales with them apparently facing defeat.

It should be noted that the term "high action content" could be considered a euphemistic description for the violent fighting that characterized the plot. The "bad guys" were intent on killing the protagonists and their attempts resulted in the deaths of a number of bystanders. While the "good guys" did not start the fighting they were certainly adept in defending themselves and in inflicting mortal wounds upon their attackers.

3. Use of onomatopoeia and varied print styles.
from The Uncanny X-MEN #306 Nov 93

The following words were found in this book: TAP, ROOAAR, BRZZAT, WOULNPH, ARRGH, SCHRRRIIPP, SQUARK, BOURAAKT, and BRAFLOOM.

Print size for these words was larger than that employed for the rest of the text and often did not remain constant for all the letters within the word. The words were incorporated into the picture rather than the text and were drawn in bold colours which contrasted with the background.

4. Use of puns and slang phrases and exclamations.
from BATMAN #668 Nov 93

The following expressions are examples of slang phrases and expressions employed in this book:

Take your pick, pal. p.5
Huh p.6
Yes! p.7

No sweat. p.7
Throw some cash around. p.8
Whoop it up. p.9
I don't need the hassle. p.12

from ROBIN #1 Nov 93

Examples of use of puns:

It's time for this bird to fly. p.4

(Referring to Robin fleeing in his car Redbird.)

*Everything about him is electric, except
 his personality. p.18*

5. Elimination of speaker tags.

All of the published comic books consulted used speech bubbles rather than speaker tags.

6. Use of narrative bridging captions.

from X-MEN 2099 #2 Nov 93

The following narrative bridging captions were used to indicate a change in locale:

Beneath the abandoned Neuvo Sol Arcology p.1
The Hoover Dam p.10
Safer than Neuvo Sol p.11
Elsewhere p.16
Later p.18

7. Use of irony.

from ROBIN #2 Dec 93

The following sentences were deemed to be instances of irony:

*I get a car, drive it five miles from the house
 and I'm busted! p.1*

And right after that ya were gonna go over and serve milk and cookies at the old folks home. p.3

I've got to find someone my own size to fight sometime. But I guess that's what comes with being an underdog. p.16

Radio said [the message] was from a little bird. Said he'd meet you for milk and cookies later. p.21

8. Use of foreshadowing.

from THE UNCANNY X-MEN #306 Nov 93

The following sentences foreshadow later events in this book:

It is a moment...that unfortunately, cannot last. p.1

(foreshadows future conflict)

It was a year ago today that I lost Candy. p.4

(foreshadows the reappearance of Candy)

The following interchanges appear to foreshadow events that will occur in future books:

J: *It's over, Warren.*

W: *Is it, Jean? He said there were others. p.31*

X: *Do you think [your father] will extend the same courtesy to us...that I extended to him...? p.12*

In addition there was a two page interaction between two characters which had no obvious connection to the plot of this volume but possibly foreshadows events in future volumes.

The examples gathered from published comic books indicate that the eight identified features are characteristic of the comic book genre.

CHAPTER IV Results and Discussion

The writing that the boys completed was examined for evidence of the presence of the eight features identified as being characteristic of comic books. In addition, observations were made of other features of their writing that seemed related to the comic book genre but did not fit precisely into the specified headings. Finally, a record was made of some of the boys' comments that indicated their perceptions of the important features of the comic book genre.

Comic book characteristics in the subjects writing

1. Mutual dependence of pictures and text.

The boys did not complete the comic book pictures so it is not possible to identify instances of picture-text dependence. However, they indicated that they did not expect that the words they wrote would be sufficient to tell the whole story. As they shared what they were writing amongst themselves or with the researcher they made a point of explaining what would be happening in the pictures that would accompany the text. Occasionally such explanations resulted from the researcher asking questions because she could not follow the plot. The boys' explanations were often accompanied by gestures implying action and motion.

The following are some comments they made indicating their awareness of the interdependence of pictures and text:

Scott: Here [points to text which does not mention a plane]. The pictures will show he's flying the plane and you can see the highway and the cars on it down below. He's looking for the car.

Azreal: He's watching TV--these are the words coming from the TV set. [points to text which contains words unrelated to previous text].

That's the sound of a door opening. [points]
The picture will show the door opening and the hand pushing it.

Jean Luc: Here they're having a fight with 4 or 5 of Rocky's men. [Text consists of noise words.]

In this part they'll be checking video monitors and computer screens.

2. A fast moving plot with a high action content.

One of the key features of the boys' writing was the high level of activity. Their stories were filled with continuous action as their heros moved from one dangerous situation to the next. High speed travel, chases and fights were frequent in their narratives as is indicated in the following chart which shows the totals for the stories that Scott and Jean Luc completed (one each), and for one of Azreal's uncompleted stories.

ACTION COMPONENTS IN THE SUBJECTS' WRITING

	High Speed Travel	Chases	Fights
Scott	2	3	3
Jean Luc	3	2	4
Azreal	1	1	3

Scott's story involved nearly continuous fighting between the two main characters, including hand-to-hand combat and weaponry. However neither character apparently suffered permanent damage. The fighting in Jean Luc's and Azreal's stories involved more characters, a number of whom were seriously wounded or killed.

3. Use of onomatopoeia with varied print styles.

The use of onomatopoeia was clearly evident in the boys' writing and appeared to be a feature they enjoyed using. They commented on some of the words they had read in comic books (like CHUT, PAVOOM, BOOSH) and they sometimes read each other's sound words varying intonation for the best effects. They experimented with different print styles when using sound words. A sample from each boy's work follows:

P-p-p-pauu wooooom.

Scott

BOOSH! SWACK

Azreal

CHOOM! HRUF.* SLAMY

Jean Luc

BAM! GROCK! SLAM!
CRUNCH! SMASH!

4. Use of puns and slang phrases and exclamations.

The one pun recorded in the sample was found in Jean Luc's story and was a deliberate play on the villain's name which was Rocky. (Jean Luc took pains to explain that this was intentional and not a spelling mistake.)

Jean Luc: Don't take me for granite, son.

The following words and phrases found in the boys' writing seems to fit the category of 'slang' expressions.

Scott: Hey! Okay
Yeah You're mine!

Jean Luc: Wow! What a ride.
I thought we was goners.

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Azreal: *G'wan git! Huh?*
You're mighty jumpy.

5. Elimination of speaker tags.

Comic books use speech bubbles to indicate speech or thought and therefore do not usually use speaker tags such as 'he said' and 'she called'. Scott used no speaker tags at all in his story. Azreal used some speaker tags in his writing but eliminated them when he added the words to his illustrations. Jean Luc initially followed common usage for speaker tags in his writing, but he, too, eliminated them when he added the writing to his illustrations.

An example of the elimination of speaker tags:

Scott: *Hey, Malone, what are you doing in a dump
like this?*
Oh, I got fired.
I know how you feel.

Scott commented on his use of quotations marks and requested information on where the question mark should be placed. He said he wouldn't need to bother with quotation marks when he drew the comic because the words would be in bubbles.

An example of speaker tags used in the initial writing and eliminated when combined with pictures:

Azreal: *"Batman, you are not right, you kill too much,"*
said a loud and thunderous voice.

ILLUSTRATION SHOWING ELIMINATION OF SPEAKER TAGS

6. Use of narrative bridging captions.

Narrative captions are words used to indicate a change of time or place. In comic books they are often placed within a box at the top of a picture frame. Scott used three such bridges, Azreal used two, and Jean Luc used four. In each case the bridge indicated that some action had been completed or that the characters were now in a different locale.

Jean Luc: (A while later)
(Later on the bridge)

Azreal: (A half hour later)
(Meanwhile in a shop)

Scott: (Later on)
(One hour later)

7. Use of irony.

A form of irony can be seen in the following examples from the boys' work:

Azreal: *"We are alone"* (spoken as the villain appears)

Jean Luc: *They met a welcoming committee @*x!!@*
(a fight ensues)

Scott: *"Now I'm angry."* (spoken after numerous exchanges of blows)

8. Use of foreshadowing.

A form of foreshadowing appeared directly in Jean Luc's work in his use of the phrases "The End--For Now" and "To be continued". Azreal used foreshadowing more subtly in one of his stories by having a character appear on a TV screen just before he was attacked by the villain. Scott included a conversation between two characters who apparently had nothing to do with the plot. He explained that this often happens in comic books and these characters would show up in the continuation of his story if he wrote one.

Other Observations

Although action in comic books is shown visually it is sometimes reinforced or explained by the words. The boys were writing before they drew the pictures and they included many action verbs. (Their characters seldom simply went or walked anywhere.)

Jean Luc: *Captain Nepalm emerged*

He broke out

Rocky plunged

Scott: *Sabertooth climbed*

Wolverine jumped behind and clawed

Wolverine chucked

Azreal: *He stormed back*

Batman leaped

Mekros burst in

The boys displayed an in-depth understanding of some of the features of comic books and were able to explain the context of some events and the reasons for some actions in the published comic books that were not immediately obvious to the researcher (who was a novice reader in this genre). Each of the comic books that they explained had some part of its plot rooted in a previous publication. Azreal explained that the heroes usually had some qualities that would give them an advantage but that they were limited because they were not supposed to hurt bystanders or even kill the "bad guys" if they could avoid it. Scott equated the "bad guys" to the forces of evil. He noted that the leaders of the opposing forces are often related or have some shared history.

The boys all agreed that comic book stories were seldom completely finished as the writers usually left open the possibility of renewed battles.

Azreal: *For one thing the heros are not supposed to kill anyone if they can help it, so they can always fight again.*

Scott: *You might think the enemies are dead but there's usually some trick or reason that they aren't so they can come back and start again. At the end of my story Sabertooth seems to be dead but he really lands on a ledge you can't see. If I decide to write some more I would start it by drawing a picture of Sabertooth on the ledge and explaining how he escaped.*

Jean Luc explained that he ended his story with The End-- For Now so that if he wanted to write more it would turn out that Rocky wasn't really dead.

A number of the boys' casual comments referred to the advanced technology weapons and vehicles used by the comic book characters. They considered most of these to be science fiction but they enjoyed imagining them.

During the interview session the boys were asked what it was that made comic books different from the other books they had read. They quickly threw out the following ideas which seemed to focus mainly on surface features:

- the pictures/drawings and the colouring
- the print is all in capital letters
- the sound effects
- the speech bubbles

They took a little more time in answering the question, "Why do you like to read comic books?" They responded:

They have nice adventures and action.

Sometimes it's violent, but it's still interesting to read.

They're imaginative.

They have lots of science fiction things and really neat weapons.

The plots are good and you get ideas for your own stories.

And you can get money for collecting them!

The analysis of their writing shows that they included all the surface features that they articulated as being essential to the comic book genre except the use of capital letters. They also included the adventure, action, foreshadowing and science fiction elements that they recognized as being essential. They did not comment on the comic books' use of slang, irony or narrative bridging captions but these features did appear in their work. It is possible that they did not have the same awareness and conscious control of these features as they did of the features they were able to articulate.

The boys were quite sure that they would not be allowed to read comics at school but, curiously enough, they could not recall any discussion of this proscription. It was apparently accepted as an unquestioned and unwritten rule. Azreal commented: *You're only allowed to bring comics if you just bring them and keep them in your pack. Like if you were taking them somewhere after school.*

In response to a question about writing in school Azreal said he had not written any stories yet this year. Scott and

Jean Luc said they hadn't done much, and what they had done had been in response to specific assignments. They did not think they would be allowed to write comic books. Scott said:

I don't think she would let me write a comic because in my Halloween story I had a Ninja flea. It was just a weird thing that a wizard might turn something into. And he was just little and he did at least four things like kicking and biting and the teacher thought it was a bit violent.

It was clear that in spite of school proscriptions the boys took the reading and writing of comic books seriously. They talked of the possibility of a career in writing and/or drawing comics. Jean Luc in particular was interested in the idea of inventing a new superhero idea that would be accepted by a publisher. They kept their collections ordered on shelves and they reacted with near horror to the researcher's rather naive query as to whether they read their comics in bed.

Azreal: I never read Batman or the others in bed because I might crinkle them.

Scott: Sometimes I might read them on my bed, but not in my bed. Once I tore the corner of one and after that I learned to take care of them.

Jean Luc: They could be worth money someday.

Summary

The question being examined in this study was whether or not characteristics of the comic book genre could be found in the writing of children who read comic books.

Of the eight features identified as being characteristic of comic books only one, the mutual dependence of pictures and text, was not clearly present in the subjects' writing. The absence of this feature appears to be due to the fact that the pictures were not completed as the boys indicated orally that pictures were necessary and that the words did not convey the whole story. In addition, a few of the instances of irony in their work were dependent on the contrast between the spoken text and the action which was to be shown in the pictures.

The elimination of speaker tags was not consistent although again the boys indicated that in a completed comic book these would not be present. Scott left the tags out completely, but Jean Luc and Azreal used the tags when they were writing the story although they left them out in the few picture frames that they showed the researcher.

Each of the boys included an instance of foreshadowing in his work and they all included several instances of the use of narrative bridges. Slang phrases were also evident in their work but only Jean Luc used a pun.

The two most striking features of their writing were the use of onomatopoeia and the high action content. Their plots involved a great deal of fighting which was accompanied by a variety of sound effects and seemed to present a faithful imitation of their favourite comic books. Scott's story dealt with an ongoing conflict between two characters but their

fighting resulted in injuries that did not in any way prevent the characters from continuing their battle. The action in his story did not result in apparent injury to any other characters or innocent bystanders. In the stories written by Azreal and Scott the protagonists emerged from the fighting relatively unscathed but some other characters were seriously injured or killed. Their stories seemed in this regard to be more closely modelled on the published comic books.

CHAPTER V Conclusion

While there is a growing body of research that suggests that reading and writing are interrelated, the exact nature of that interrelationship has yet to be defined. One commonly held assumption is that reading can have an effect on writing. Studies by Eckhoff (1983), Mikkelsen (1985), Cox et al. (1990), and Crowhurst (1991) showed that student writing is affected by instructional reading materials; studies by Heard (1989) and Harwayne (1992) indicate that student writing is affected by instruction in the use of reading material as a writing model. Consideration of these studies leads to the question: Does recreational reading have an effect on student writing?

The study reported in this paper investigated student writing in the comic book genre by subjects who were avid comic book readers. The findings were:

- 1) that specific features characteristic of the comic book genre can be found in the writing of the subjects of the study
- 2) that these features include elements of the surface features, content and style commonly found in action superhero type comic books.

The findings suggest that recreational reading in the comic book genre has had an effect on the writing of these particular students.

Problems and questions arising from the study

One of the difficulties encountered in this study was finding a suitable time for the writing sessions. The boys had other commitments which were important to them and they were not available on the weekends. The sessions were held for one hour after school was dismissed but the boys were tired of school by that time and what they were being asked to do was a lot like school work. They sometimes had trouble getting started. They appeared to be interested in what they were doing and willing to complete some writing, but a more favourable time of day and longer or more sessions might have resulted in a larger body of work for analysis.

Another problem in this study is the limited number of subjects. These boys are not representative of all students nor do they adequately represent the students who are comic book readers. Some of the questions that are left unanswered are:

- 1) Do the subjects exhibit any of the same characteristic features when they are composing in other genres? (e.g., high action content, use of irony, use of slang)

2) Do other avid comic book readers exhibit the same characteristics in their writing?

3) Would students who do not read action comic books produce similar writing if they were asked to write a comic?

Any study that attempted to answer these questions would first have to deal with the issue of violence. While there is no denying that comic books can provide a powerful motivation for some students to practise reading and writing, it is a fact that many comic books depict acts of violence. In a society that is becoming more concerned with the increase in violent behaviour in children, an educator who encouraged children to read or write action comics could face a great deal of opposition. While we all would decry censorship, these questions may have to go unanswered until publishers produce comic books that are less violent but are nevertheless exciting and engaging for the students. An alternative might be to do as the BCTF Task Force on Violence (1994) has suggested for other media and develop programs "which would aim to critically examine [sic] media, demystify and de-glamorize violence, sexism and racism" (p.18).

Suggestions for further research

One of the main difficulties in a study of the effect of reading on writing lies in establishing what precisely has influenced a particular piece of writing, particularly in

respect to rhetorical and stylistic devices. One possible answer would be to have a long term study of one individual writer done by a researcher who was in a position to be familiar with all of the texts the subject has read. (Of course, it would also be necessary to be familiar with the movies, TV shows and video games that may have influenced the writer during the same period.)

A more plausible research effort would be to study the writing of a group of writers who are avid readers of a specific genre such as mystery stories and compare the writing produced to that produced by another group of writers who are avid readers of a different genre. Various genre such as science-fiction, sports stories, adventure stories, etc. might be considered. It would also be of interest to compare the writing of students who specialize in one genre with the writing of students who are more eclectic readers or to study the writing of students who read and reread books by one author who has a distinctive style.

Implications for classroom practice

Since it seems likely that reading can have an influence on student writing, one implication is that teachers should try to capitalize on the reading-writing effect by encouraging students to "read like a writer" (Smith, 1983) and to be attentive to the styles and techniques of different authors.

A second implication is that students should be encouraged to read widely in a variety of genre. This will require educators to broaden the curriculum to include material that has not traditionally been considered "great literature" and to include instruction in the critical evaluation of this material.

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Footnotes

In compliance with the requirements of the Behavioral Sciences Screening Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects, permission for this study was obtained from the Superintendent of Schools, SD #88. (Appendix A). Letters explaining the study were given to the subjects and their parents and the subjects and their parents were asked to sign written consent forms. (Appendix B).

APPENDIX A

Letter of permission from Superintendent of Schools
School District #88

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 88 (Terrace)

3211 KENNEY STREET
TERRACE, B.C. V8G 1Z5

FAX (604) 633-4267

1993 09 29

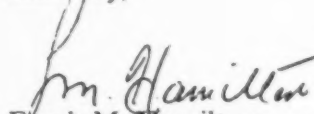
Linda Jenkins
E. T. Kenney Primary School
4620 Loen Avenue
Terrace, B.C. V8G 1Z5

Dear Linda:

I am pleased to give the approval of School District 88 (Terrace) for you to proceed for your M.Ed. Study "Investigation of the Effects of Leisure Activities on Children's Written Narratives".

Good luck with your M.Ed.: I look forward to examining the results of your research.

Sincerely,



Frank M. Hamilton
Superintendent of Schools

FMH:bc

cc: A. R. Shepherd

Principal, E. T. Kenney Primary School

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY

SURVEY OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Name _____

1) Do you play Nintendo, Sega or other TV games? _____

If yes, how many hours per week? _____

Please list your favourite games: _____

2) How many hours a week do you spend watching TV? _____

Please list your favourite shows: _____

3) Do you read books? _____ If yes, how often? _____

If yes, please list some of your favourite books and/or authors: _____

4) Do you read comic books? _____ If yes, how many have you read in the last month? _____

If yes, please list your favourite comics: _____

5) If you take lessons (like music, swimming) please tell what they are and how long you have been taking them: _____

6) If you are a member of an organization (like cubs) or on a team (like soccer), please tell what it is: _____

7) If you have done any writing outside of school please tell what you wrote: _____

8) Please list any other leisure activities or hobbies: _____

APPENDIX C

Letter of consent for participation in study

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Page 1 of 2

Department of Language Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5788
Fax: (604) 822-3154

Mr. and Mrs. _____

Terrace, B.C.

V8G -----

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Xxxxxx,

I would like your permission to ask _____ to participate in a study of the influence of leisure activities on student writing. I am doing this research for a graduate thesis paper I am writing as part of my program in language education at UBC.

Participation in this study would mean that _____ would spend 45 minutes on four different days working with me. On three of these days he would be writing stories and on the fourth day he would be discussing the writing. Samples of _____'s work would provide some of the data for my paper. He would be identified by a pseudonym when his work was being quoted, but his participation will be recognized in the preface to the paper.

If you will permit _____ to participate please sign and return the permission form. The second copy is for your records.

You are free to withdraw your permission at any time. Such withdrawal would have no effect on your child's standing in his classroom.

If you have any questions regarding this study please telephone me at 635-3563 or contact my advisor at UBC, Dr. J.F. Belanger at 822-5479.

Yours truly,

Linda Jenkins

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Page 2 of 2

Department of Language Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5788
Fax: (604) 822-3154

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF
LEISURE ACTIVITIES ON STUDENT WRITING

Student's Name: _____

I _____ to my child's participation in this study.
(consent/do not consent)

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the consent form.

Parent's signature _____

Date _____

I _____ to participate in this study.
(consent/ do not consent)

Student's signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

Student Writing Samples

SCOTT

Wolverine Vers S abertooth

"Wolverine I'm coming for you!"

"Oh-oh S abertooth is coming
I'll lose him in the sewer!"

S abertooth jumped out of a
man hole and landed right
infront of Wolverine. Wolverine
jumped behind S abertooth and
clawed him in the back and
jumped back up a man hole.

S abertooth ran after him:

"I'm goina getch ya!"

(later on) "Haw! All alone

what are you doing in a
dunp like this!" "Oh I got
fired!" "I know how you
feel!" "Ya you do one thing
wrong and your gone!"

well I gotta go. I have
to be on the road again".

"Well see ye". Woosh "Haw what
was that." "Ha-ha-ha!" "It's Wolverine!"

"S abertooth" "Ya me again?" "S abertooth
your dead!" "Oh-ya catch this!" "Woosh!"

"A-a-a". "Now I'm angry!" "Ack 'rha"

"I am you Wolverine". Wolverine jumped
in a alley. S abertooth climbed up a
fire escape ladder and jumped down
on Wolverine. "You". Wolverine ran
away and hid in a car. S abertooth
canal by. Slice Wolverine with the
oil tank and threw a match under.

BOOM! "A-a-a" S abertooth got
blown away. "A-a-a". Then S abertooth

75
 got up. "I overine your mine!"
 (One hour later). "Hay what are
 you doing? I need the plane!" "No
 mister!" R-r-r-r! Oh-hay mister
 don't hurt me". P-p-p-p-poud rooom.
 "I overine is gona be hunted down".
 (A bit later). R-roon. "I overine your
 dead." Oh-oh its I abretooth". "Hay
 can I borrow your car its an emergency.
 No. Ch-ch-ch-ch. Oh-hay". "The key to".
 "Th-ya here". "Thanks". Put-put-rooom.
 "There we go". Zoom. "Ha-ha-ha-"
 "I hoo". I overine put the car on
 atomic drive and then he jumped
 on the roof of the car. Then
 I abretooth came down in
 the airplane shooting at I overine
 I overine swung his claws blocking
 the bullets and then he jumped
 up and grabbed the landing gear.
BANG! YAOW! "Ha-ha
 I abretooth I gotcha". **WOW!**

BOOSH! I abretooth got knocked out.
 Then I overine jumped back onto the car.
WACK! I overine punched I abretooth
 in the face. **WAM! YAOW!** I abretooth
 elbowed I overine in the back. **SWACK**
 I overine kicked I abretooth off the car.
SWOOSH! I abretooth jumped back
 on the car but he was injured.
 Then I abretooth jumped on I overine
 and they both fell off the car.

"I abretooth your dead". **SWOOSH!**
A-A-A. I overine chucked I abretooth
 down a pit.

JEAN LUC

"Ohoh! It's the Rock men! I'll take care of them, dat
WHOP!!! SMASH!!! TINKLE!!! BAM!!!
 "Austa lavista, Baby!" "Wow dad, I thought
 we was goners!" "Now son, don't take
 me for granite." "Now for Rocky!!!"

(Later on the bridge)

BOOM!! BOOM!! BOOM!!! Oh, Captain!!
 It's me Rocky!! **CRACK!!! OWW!!!**
 "Gasp!!" **BOON!! Wisthe!! SPLASH!!!**

TO BE CONTINUED!!

~~Part Two~~

Part 2 of 3

(5000 YEARS LATER)

Captain Nepalpm woke up. He Broke out of his prison of ice. "Wow". "Who are you?" Captain Nepalpm saw he was in a museum. "Where am I?" Captain Nepalpm asked. "And where is the closest Hover-Bus terminal???" "What year is this?" "6994" The museum authority answered. "Why do you ask?" "Wow, I must have been hit on the head harder than I thought," remarked Captain Nepalpm. "Who stuck me in the deep freeze overnight? And why am I a display in a museum? Where are we? In the chaos zone??" He went out of the museum. Captain Nepalpm caught a cab cruiser to town. The bridge was mended!! "Ho.. Wha--wh-- whe- When did you fix the bridge?" Captain Nepalpm stammered. "9 years ago" said the caddy. Captain Nepalpm dove off the bridge. "I gotta get Rocky." **SPLASH!**

12 WEEKS LATER

80

"Found him!" Cried Captain Nepalnm.

Fight

BAM! CRACK! BAM!
CRUNCH!

SMASH

"I won" Captain Nepalnm cried
(He jumped into his transport
wreck and it explodes)

Part 3 of 3

Part three: NOT AGAIN!

Captain Nepalnm emerged from the wreckage of the transport vehicle. "Wow" he thought "What a ride." That would kill a guy. He went to where he had fought Rocky last. "Well he's gone this time. Maybe I won. But maybe not. I'll check." He goes to where he killed Rocky. "I won!" "Rocky Plunged up." He cried. "Congratulations!" "You won Captain." Rocky Falls down. "It's too bad it happened this way." said the Captain.

THE
END....

For now.

AZREAL

Batman

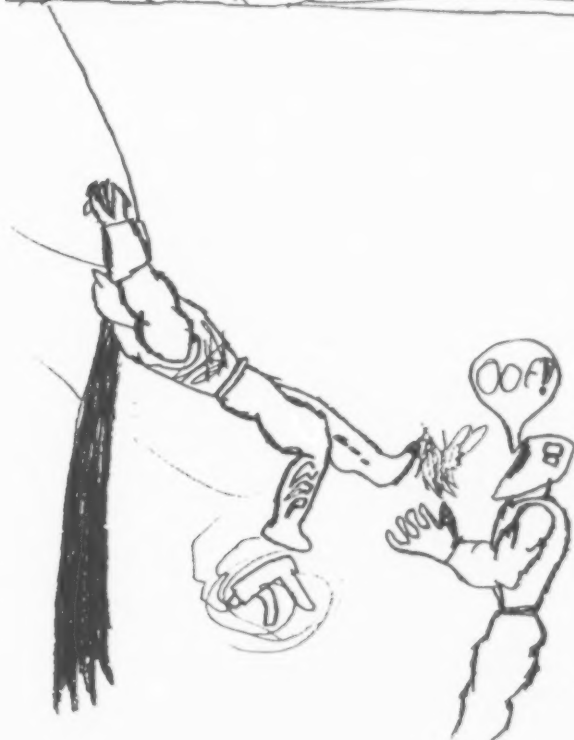


"Batman you are not right, you kill too much."

Said a loud thunderous voice. Bruce Wayne why did you bring in this hologram. Now to more important matters, like improving the old Batman costume. For a hour Azreal draws the blue prints to his new costume. One hour later the costume was finished. Mean while in a sand which shop

a secret meeting was being held. It was

mercant and Lucio is talking about how Bane had fallen to the new Batman. Just then Mekros burst in firing two different machine guns. After five seconds of rapid fire twelve men had fallen to the floor. Then Batman leaped in kicking Mekros to the floor. Mekros shot Batmans cape knocking Batman Down



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PREDATOR

87

Los Angeles, Summer, 1997. It's going on
the fifty-ninth day of 107 degree heat,
with no sign of letting up...and
for the second time today, we're at
a full-scale fire-fight. This one started half
an hour ago as a routine traffic citation.
It got out of hand. The side walk scalds
your feet. Your car stick in the tar on
the street. You just want out of here...
Anything to forget the heat. It's no
wonder the prime commodity here is
snow—even if it's the kind you foot
up your nose. God I hate this weather.
BLAM! KRAK! KRAK! "It's Mike..
Lieutenant Harrigan!" said Leona. "Don't keep me in
suspense, Danny boy," said Mike. "Bad scene, Mike."

Predator 2

Cycle cop stumbled ^{P2} right into a Nark
 stake out. Those El Scorpios are armed to
 the teeth!!" said Danny. "We're keeping them
 pinned down, Mike, but Johnson's bleeding to
 death." said Leona. "Where's the SWAT team, Leona?"
 said Mike. "Still tied up in San Pedro." replied Leona.
 "He won't last much longer, Mike. We'd need a
 tank to get him outta' there!" said Danny.
 "I'm gonna have me a little chat with these
 dudes. When I give the signal, give me some
 cover." said Mike. You got it! replied Danny. "We
 could have waited for an armored assault
 vehicle, but why just sit and twiddle my
 thumbs in Dante's inferno? After all, I was
 used to being outgunned and out
 manned by the drug lords... I'd just have

Predator 2 p.3
have to make do with what I had...

VPROOOOOOMM! BRRAAPAPRAP!

KRAK! Ping! SPLAT! A little eye-hand
coordination--good ol' yankee ingenuity...

...and the element of surprise! **RAATATATAT!**

SKREEEE! "Hang in there Johnson!" said Mike
"cover fire -- NOW!" said Mike "Surprise Muchachos!"
said Mike. **PVOOM! POOM! *★! *! *** "That was

close" said Mike. "Andale, man! Andale! they'll be
on our *★! *! any second!" yelled Nark.

"Come and get it, Putas! El Scorpions is
ready!" yelled Nark. **KRASH!** As an invisible

force came crashing thru the window. When
I came down from my adrenalin high, I
had a wierd feeling in my gut. It wasn't
th slight queasiness I'd gotton used to. "Mike--

Predator 2 ^{p.4}

you okay?" yelled Leona. "Fine, Leona! let's get the rest of them before they dig in!" said Mike. "Mike just got an order from Chief heinemann! 'Secure per meter, surround building and wait.'" said Danny. "Wait?! for what?" asked Mike. "Some special team, he said. Feds, D.E.A., who know.." replied Danny. **KABOOM!** "What the...? sarge, any of our people in the building?" said Mike. "No! we had orders not to go in!" replied Danny. "Let's go!" said Mike. "Lieutenant, I can't send anyone in there! Heinemann's on his way!" said Danny. "Well, Heinemann can kiss my sweet ***!!**" said Mike. "Were with you, Mike!" said Danny. "Danny, check that door!" said Mike. "Klick! Klick!" "It's locked! ready, Mike?" said Danny. ⁹² Mike and Danny bust thru the door yelling.

Bat Man vs Predator P.1

It all began in a junkyard. "Quiet Satan!" said a hard voice. **ROOWV!** "You're mighty jumpy tonight boy... Somethin' got ya spooked, huh?" A left jab! Steve down again!

"Well, why don't ya go find it and leave me to watch the game in peace. ☹️*★-†*★!" **GRRRR!** "G'wan git! **SLAM!** As the man stormed back to his T.V. **HRUF..***

"Huh? Satan...?" "Satan you all right boy?"

"Satan...? As a horrified man discovers what has happened to his dog. **VSS!** "Wha--?"

CHOOM! A laser cuts through his body like a hot knife through butter. **SPLAT!**

Chf! Chf! Chf! Walks an unseen figure.

CREEEK! Congrats to you King!

Batman vs Predator ??

[Thanks Geor] **KLICK!** > Congratulations
 champ < says a low deep voice. A half hour
later **VROOOM!** "America, sir? I understood
 he is some sort of gangster." said Alfred.
 "He is, Alfred. Gotham's biggest." said Bruce
 Wayne. "The view from the top of the
 pile should be quite illuminating." said
 Bruce. "It's so good to be alone, Marcus. I
 missed you, with training and all... We are
 alone, aren't we?" said Lita, Marcus's wife.
 "Sure, Lita, sure. 'Cept for Mr. Yeager's
 guys over at the elevator. He says now
 I'm a public figure, I gotta be careful..." said
 Marcus. "Why, I bet you're even tougher
 than Batma- **CHONK!** "Thought